

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 734

By Beavers

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Ed Rice, Jr. and the late Ed Rice, Sr. upon their induction into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should specially recognize those outstanding citizens who are dedicated to promoting the importance of agriculture in our society; and

WHEREAS, agriculture has been a cornerstone of Wilson County since the county's founding in 1799, and those citizens involved in farming have always been a vital part of the community; and

WHEREAS, two such estimable individuals are Ed Rice, Jr., and his father, the late Ed Rice, Sr., who are being inducted into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame on April 1, 2014, for their ongoing legacy as world champion country hams curers through Rice's Country Hams, their family business of some sixty years; and

WHEREAS, born in 1913, Ed Rice, Sr., grew up on a farm in Mt. Juliet and attended Mt. Juliet High School, where he was president of his 1931 senior class; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school, Mr. Rice, Sr., went to work for his uncle, Edd Hunter, in his country store and eventually bought the store from his uncle in 1935; built in 1886, this store still serves as the retail outlet for Rice's Country Hams; and

WHEREAS, as the country grocery business began to lose ground to supermarket chains, Mr. Rice, Sr. began searching for a new way to support his family; his brother-in-law suggested that he cure some country hams, but unfortunately, Mr. Rice, Sr., knew nothing about curing country hams; and

WHEREAS, Ed Rice, Sr., then visited the extension service in Lebanon and obtained a booklet on the subject written by Dr. Curtis Melton, a professor at the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, his first year in business, Mr. Rice, Sr., cured eighteen country hams, all but one of which were stolen, and it was another two years before he could afford to buy hams again; and

WHEREAS, in a dramatic reversal of fortune, Ed Rice, Sr., was curing more than 700 hams per year at the time of his retirement some thirty years later; many of these delicious country hams were sent to presidents, country music stars, and other celebrities, and Rice's country hams were praised by mass media nationwide; and

WHEREAS, William Edward Rice, Jr., was the first-born child of Edward Rice, Sr., and Mamie Louise Smith and grew up working in his father's country store and helping him cure country hams; and

WHEREAS, like his father, Ed Rice, Jr., attended Mt. Juliet schools, where he played basketball and football, was a member of FFA, and served as vice president of his senior class; and

WHEREAS, on May 28, 1960, Ed Rice, Jr., married Ginger Crockett; soon after their wedding, he began working for Ford Glass and enjoyed a productive career there until his retirement in 1991; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Ed Rice, Jr., took over the country ham business from his father; working side by side, Ed and Ginger Rice transformed the business from a small family concern into a large direct-shipping and retail operation that is renowned throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, the Rice family has produced forty-three grand champion hams since 1971, and once again in 2013, a Rice country ham won the grand championship at the Tennessee State Fair; and

WHEREAS, today, Rice's Country Hams continues to thrive under the leadership of Ed and Ginger's daughter and son-in-law, Ginny and Scott Dabbs, and the company is the oldest retail business in operation in Mt. Juliet; and

WHEREAS, the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame honors those dedicated citizens who committed their lives to developing and maintaining the highest standards and principles, and it is fitting that this General Assembly honor Ed Rice, Jr., and the late Ed Rice, Sr., for their valuable service to agriculture and the farming community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor Ed Rice, Jr., and the late Ed Rice, Sr., on the occasion of their induction into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame, as we reflect fondly upon their many contributions to upholding the agricultural traditions of Wilson County and the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.